

Activity 2: Biographies

Activity Description:

This lesson provides background information and introduces students to the migration concept, the reasons people leave their homes for new lands and the reasons they go to a particular destination. Students then use this information to create their own Stampeder character.

1. Begin as a whole group to share with the children some stories of true Stampedeers. To begin the discussion ask students what kind of people they thought went up to the Yukon. Then, share the following excerpt from Gold! The Klondike Adventure describing some peoples' experiences.

The Klondike gold rush was on. 'THE POPULATION IS PREPARING TO MOVE TO THE KLONDIKE' shouted the newspaper headlines. 'EVERY MAN SEEMS TO HAVE CAUGHT THE KLONDIKE FEVER!' The West Coast of the United States was not the only region to be turned upside down by the Yukon discoveries. "Klondike fever" had spread to cities and towns throughout the country--- and throughout the world. In New York, 2,000 people tried to buy tickets for the Klondike before the news of the gold strikes was one day old. Soon, groups of fortune hunters from Australia, Scotland, England, France, Italy, and other countries were also making their way toward the Yukon. (p. 20, Ray)

2. Have students form groups and read the attached biography documents. Put a few of the biographies at each station. Bring the group back together to discuss what they learned about the Stampedeers. Next, discuss the reasons what motivated the Stampedeers to leave their homes and journey north to the Yukon. Read the following excerpt to begin the discussion:

In Seattle the excitement had reached a state of frenzy...the reason for this wild excitement was simple: The Klondike gold ships arrived during a time of terrible poverty for the United States. Thousands of businesses were closing and millions of people had lost their jobs. It was not unusual to see a man die of hunger in the streets or a family pushed out of its home because of unpaid bills. This period of hardship, known as an economic depression, had lasted for several years and it seemed that it would never end. (p. 20, Ray)

3. Discuss the reasons for migration. Explain that although many people across the United States were pushed away from their desperate situations and pulled to the Klondike by the hope of getting rich, each individual Stampeder had his or her own reason for joining the rush to the goldfields. Finish with a discussion of the biographies and have students analyze why people left their homes and why they decided to go to the Klondike.

Ask students to reflect on the biographies they read and chart (as a class) what pushed and pulled the different Stampedeers to the goldfields.

TEACHER NOTES: Mount a copy of each biography on card stock or poster board and laminate to preserve for future use.

OBJECTIVE: To learn about historical characters who participated in the Klondike gold rush; To introduce the concept of migration "pushes and pulls."

MATERIALS:

1. Collection of biographies of Klondikers mounted on poster board
2. Chart paper title "Pushes and Pulls"
3. [Example of Biographies \(PDF file\)](#)

TIME: 45 to 90 minutes